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कुलपति, काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय

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ुख, संगीत एवं मंच कला संकाय

निदेशक, चिकित्सा विज्ञान संस्थान

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REVIEW OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020 (NEP) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HEALTH EDUCATION

*VISHAL GUPTA * AND DR. VANDANA VERMA***

national policy on education firstly formulated in the year 1968 in response to the mmendations of the Kothari Commission and has n renewed twice since in 1986 and 1992 to lay n the principles governing the education system. Dr K Kasturirangan Committee was constituted in 7, has finally drafted a policy on education, which ationally designed and updated all the previous s so this policy is known as a New Education cy 2020. The draft of recent New Education Policy) (NEP) talks about a massive change in our cational system with high priority on children's th and their nourishment. Health and education are ngly interconnected aspects of life. While healthy viduals are more likely to have better education omes, right education can improve the health is, well being and personality of a person. In doing it underlines the need for proper nourishment and d health to assist optimal learning, and proposes ain health-related interventions. The following are key approaches and interventions on health, posed in the NEP 2020.

Holistic development & multidisciplinary roach is the key principles of the NEP. Along with jects like the sciences and social sciences, the riculum contains courses that make education well-nded, useful and fulfilling, including games, sports fitness. At the school level, the NEP proposes rts-integration, or utilizing physical activities in agogical practices, to enhance the students' nitive abilities. Sports-integrated learning will help lents to achieve fitness levels envisaged in the Fit ia movement, and adopt fitness as a lifelong ievement. It will also develop their skills like laboration, self-initiative, teamwork and ponsibility. The NEP also proposes other ways to rease school students' exposure to sports and other ivities too. It offers increased flexibility and choice subjects, allowing students to choose physical ication as part of the curriculum. The Policy also poses 'bagless' days to allow students to engage in local vocational and other activities, such as sports and gardening. The NEP further encourages formation of clubs, including for sports, yoga, and health and well-being, at the level of schools, school complexes, districts and beyond the boundaries.

2. **Higher education institutions will also have departments in subjects** like sports, art and music, to provide a multidisciplinary and stimulating environment. Credits will be given for such subjects in undergraduate programs. For adult education: the policy proposes development of an education curriculum framework. Along with basic literacy, numeracy and education, the framework will include critical life skills (including healthcare and awareness, childcare and education, and family welfare); and continuing education (including sports and recreation).

3. **Health education:** Health is one of the key factors in achieving the different goals in life. The NEP includes health and nutrition, physical education, fitness, wellness, sports, sanitation and hygiene as some of the key subjects, skills and capacities that must be learned by everyone. Accordingly, the NEP proposes the inclusion of training in health, including preventive health, mental health, good nutrition, personal and public hygiene, disaster response and first-aid, and detrimental effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, as part of the school curriculum and considering the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases and intake of poor diets, this is an important reform that may lead to behavioral change towards healthier habits.

4. **Regular health check-ups and health cards** The NEP also advocates some other measures for promoting physical and mental health in the context of Healthy learning environments. This includes regular health check-ups in schools, especially for 100% immunization, and health monitoring through health cards. Health check-ups and growth monitoring under Anganwadi system will be extended to Preparatory Class students (Grade 3, 4 & 5).

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5. Reduces weight of school bags: The NEP also recommends reducing the weight of school bags and textbooks. For mental and emotional health of children, the NEP proposes introduction of social workers, counselors and community involvement into the schooling system.

6. Concept of school complexes: For implementation of some of above said reforms, the NEP proposes the concept of school complexes, which will involve sharing of resources like teachers, counselors and sports equipment and facilities. Further, special short teacher education programs will enable eminent persons to teach at schools for local professions, knowledge, and skills, including sports.

7. Medical facilities and counseling services: The NEP also demands ensuring medical facilities and counseling services within higher education institutions. This NEP suggests that some institution at district level will be affiliated to a college where a psychology and counseling cell will provide counseling services.

8. Critical health challenges: For taking a forward-looking approach and to address critical health challenges, the NEP highlights the need to develop an education system that enables India to address its key challenges, including in health. This will require high-quality studies in science, social sciences and humanities, interdisciplinary research, and other advancements in the education system. Now India also demands on cutting-edge areas, such as artificial intelligence, big data and genomic studies. The NEP further notes the need to improve professional education in certain fields, including agriculture and healthcare infrastructure.

9. Agriculture education: The agriculture education will be helpful to develop professionals who can address issues such as food sufficiency and declining land productivity. Agriculture education should be re-envisioned to make the programs more useful, and to focus on preventive healthcare and community medicine.

10. Extends the mid-day meal program: India's mid-day meal program exemplifies the need of education with a food and nutrition program. Currently, mid-day meals are provided to children in Classes 1 to 8, studying primarily in government and government-aided schools. The NEP proposes provision of early child childhood care and education to children below 5 years of age in Preparatory Classes in primary schools, and extends the mid-day meal program to these students. Further, NEP proposes provision of breakfast for school children in addition to mid-day meals[1].

11. Focusing on mental health condition: The New Education Policy's ideals, as encapsulated in the beginning of the document, include the "complete realization and liberation of the self. We know that mental health is a most important dimension of healthy life cycle. There is a notion of healthy mind in a healthy body. The NEP postulates to let students think by their own way and gives them freedom to get their own way of learning. By this way the NEP aims at "instilling knowledge of India and its varied social, cultural, and technological needs, its inimitable artistic, language, and knowledge traditions, to transform into national pride, self-confidence, self-knowledge, cooperation, and integration of social community".

12. Schooling structure: There are also some drastic changes that have been envisioned in the policy. For one, the change of the schooling structure from 10+2 to 5+3+3+4, consisting of 5 years of foundational schooling (ages 3 to 8), 3 years of preparatory school (ages 8 to 11), 3 years of middle school (ages 11 to 14), and finally 4 years of secondary school (ages 14 to 18). Certain issues, like teacher training and introduction of preschools that have been widely discussed by educationists also feature in the policy.

13. Emphasis on teaching in local language: Another noteworthy proposition is to teach students in the local language till at least the 5th grade, and preferably till the 8th grade to make their learning easy and better comprehension in their respective mother language.

14. Introduction of a multidisciplinary undergraduate programs: The other important facet of the proposal is the complete restructuring of the higher education system through the introduction of a multidisciplinary undergraduate programs, with an option of either a three or four year duration, and multiple exit and entry points. This will bring a far greater level of flexibility within the higher education system. There is an untapped repository of knowledge that students can hope to find by studying a combination of subjects. It will most definitely allow students to explore the world through the lens of multiple subjects, without the artificial constriction of streams. The second positive recommendation is the

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sibility that the NEP will provide for choosing a ree or four year program, while also allowing some ay to take gaps within one's bachelor degree dies. The rigidity of the current system comes from need to "teach" grown adults, who are old enough to and drive, rather than to facilitate their learning. his proposal allows students to have more control over eir education, and removes the rigidity that currently evails.

hrust area of NEP 2020

The portion of the NEP that talks about the mplementation of the policy, "Part IV: Making It appen" consists of two 'whole' pages. However, even ese two pages fail to provide any particulars as to ow the policy is going to be executed. For example, e policy aims to provide financial support to "various itical elements and components of education, such as suring universal access, learning resources, utritional support, matters of student safety and well- ing, adequate numbers of teachers and staff, teacher velopment, and support for all key initiatives towards putable high-quality education for underprivileged d socioeconomically disadvantaged groups." owever, nowhere does it mention how this will be ne, what institutions are going to be involved, how cess will be managed and ensured, what learning sources include, what all key initiatives are being ken towards providing high quality education to all at will require financial aid, and whether this is going be financed by the 6% of our GDP that the policy aims the government will spend on education.[2]

Specifically under the subheading mplementation", the policy writers add that the plementation will take place in consultation with ncerned ministries and departments, and reiterate that will take place with the spirit of the policy in mind. his, however, still does not clarify exactly how they an to accomplish what they have envisaged in the olicy.[3]

While this noble strategic plan has been set, there no real declaration of what the actual mean by aking our students capable of competing with the orld. It is believed that any education system should nable the learners to aspire for their country something reater than being the "Back office of the world". It kes a different kind of thought process, one that volves being intrinsically curious, to create ventions, and not innovations. The fundamental fference between the two is inventions are absolutely new ideas and discoveries of form and method, whereas innovations take inventions and adjust them to the needs arising in a specific context. In present day scenario we need skill based learning which are useful in our day to day requirements. These cannot be made possible in a few days. It will be very useful that existing source of knowledge may have better contribution to achieve, acquire and apply the available resources via our education system as per our socio-economic conditions and our need of society.

Another alarming observation is the vacant mention of the state governments and their role in this new education system, especially with regard to higher education. The centralized set up of higher education system may make hurdles to the path of education system. The absolute power given to the HECI (Higher Education Commission of India), with no clear guidelines, is distressing. This theme of centralization, itself, is of concern, as there is no safety measures put in place to ensure that the independence of the higher education system will not be compromised by the single governing body. The indifference to the state governments' role in the entire plan is also not particularly reassuring. Finally, the protection of the intellectual freedom and autonomy of colleges and the students has not been addressed by the policy at all. This adds to the alarm created by the general theme of centralization.

As an item of the concurrent list, education is a shared responsibility between states and the centre. The obvious centralization is quite alarming, for two reasons. Firstly, it can be viewed as a disregard for the quasi-federal nature of our country. What is on the concurrent list is a shared responsibility, and must continue to be so, because of the second reason, which is that centralization can make the education system far more susceptible to control, especially of the political sort. The countries that have created educational institutions, which have become centers of excellence for quality education, have ensured these institutions remain separated from the state, with utmost freedom being allowed to the students and colleges to function. In order to create such institutions in our country, the congenial environment must be created, consisting of absolute decentralization and absolute autonomy of universities.[4]

Educational policies determine the social and economic development of the nation but are often treated with apathy in legislative spheres as they don't

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provide immediate outcomes for political manifestos. In our constituent assembly following intense deliberation in the education ultimately found constitutional expression in the Directive principles of state policy DPSPs. 86th constitutional amendment i.e. Right to Education only gained the title of a Fundamental Right in 2002 by means of that. The State is bound to formulate a national policy on education to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities as per 21A, 41, 45 & 46 conferred by Articles.[5]

In a novel move up, the NEP elaborates the quality of education by promoting conceptual understanding and critical thinking. It promises to make education multi-disciplinary, well-rounded and discovery-oriented; and removes the compartmentalization of streams by allowing students greater flexibility in choosing their subjects. It also depicts the need for higher standards of imparting knowledge by establishing the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and a new National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE)[6].

The NEP emphasizes universal access to education along with plans to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio and put a stop to the spiraling drop-out rate. It proposes a change in the approach to education from the 10+2 model to a 5+3+3+4 model to encompass early childhood care and education. It also provides for regular assessment of nutrition and health, acknowledging mental health too, and assures a nutritious breakfast in addition to mid-day meals offered to the underprivileged[7].

Providing exit options for the undergraduate degree, this policy in part seems like a welcome relief to students currently crumbling under the pressure of the education system. The introduced peer-review system may make better the teaching-learning process. These factors will pave the way for students to experience a holistic learning process.[8]

Conclusion

The NEP 2020 has tried to deal with all the dimensions of health and holistic development, by including physical activity and sports, yoga, meditation, programs to provide nutrition and its assessment, counseling, immunization, regular health checkups. Multidisciplinary approach in adopting the specific branch of learning to reduce the stress may enhance the learning and productivity. Being a policy draft, it merely provides a framework, leaving a lot to implementation. While implementation can be challenging, it can go a long way in improving both education and health of the children of our country. However, the NEP does not provide any roadmap or framework for inclusion of health education in the curriculum, and much will be depend upon implementation efforts towards the Policy.

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